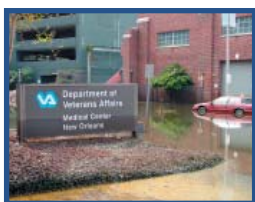


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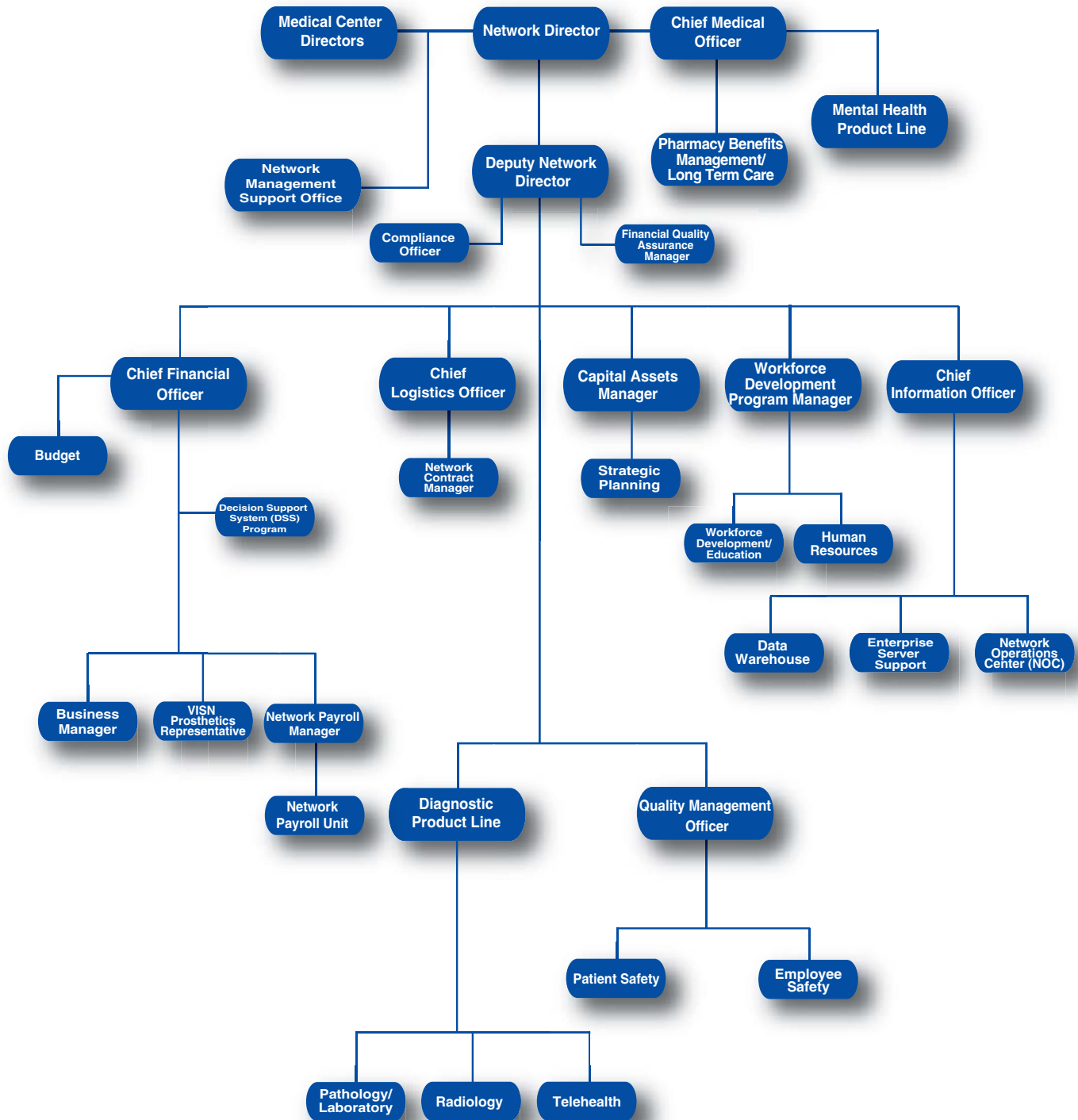
South Central VA Health Care Network—VISN 16



# Annual Report 2005

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# Our Organization



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**Left picture**—Richard Baltz, acting director, VA Gulf Coast Health Care System, briefs R. Jim Nicholson, secretary of Veterans Affairs, and others on a tour of the Biloxi Campus after Hurricane Katrina. **Middle picture**—Philip Kern (left), associate chief of staff for research at Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System (CAVHS), Congressman Vic Snyder (middle) (AR-D) 2nd District, and Timothy P Shea, FACHE, (right), director, CAVHS, cut the ribbon to medical center's new Research Annex on September 9, 2005. **Right picture**—Country music legend Lee Greenwood visits with veteran Hector Marin (U.S. Marine) during his stop at the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston on March 3, 2005.



**On the cover**—(from left to right) **Picture #1**, flood waters surround the New Orleans VA Medical Center sign. If you look closely you can see the indication on the sign of how high the water rose after Hurricane Katrina. **Picture #2**, Golden Age Games participants visit with a Native American Fancy Dancer as he prepares to participate in the pow-wow held during the 19th Annual Golden Age Games hosted by Oklahoma City VA Medical Center. **Picture #3**, Felicity Frederick, medical technician from Durham, North Carolina VA Medical Center, takes blood from New Orleans VA patient Phillip Ferrer in a special clinic created in a gymnasium for New Orleans VA patients at Houston's Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center. **Picture #4**, Richard Lemoine, a New Orleans VA patient evacuated from the hospital after Hurricane Katrina, was given this American flag by an Air National Guardsman who flew him to safety. **Picture #5**, the inside of a patient care area at the Gulfport VA facility after Hurricane Katrina destroyed the campus.

# Our Network



Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 16, known as the South Central VA Health Care Network, is an integrated health care delivery system of medical centers with the primary purpose of providing care and treatment to eligible veterans. VISN 16 is one of 21 networks within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and includes ten medical centers, 34 associated community based outpatient clinics, seven nursing homes, and two domiciliaries.

VISN 16 spans 170,000 square miles and includes nearly two million veterans in Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma. The network office is located in Jackson, Miss.

## Mission

Honor America's veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

## Vision

To be a patient centered integrated health care organization for veterans providing excellence in health care, research, and education; an organization where people choose to work; an active community partner and a back-up for National emergencies.

## Organizational Values

The network embraces the Veterans Health Administration's values:

- Trust—Sincere good intent of those with whom we work.
- Respect—Holding in high regard the dignity of patients and coworkers.
- Compassion—Demonstrating empathy and caring in all that we say and do.
- Commitment—Dedication and a promise to work hard to do all that we can to provide service to coworkers and patients in accordance with the highest principle.
- Excellence—Being exceptionally good, and being the most competent.

## Key Drivers

- Satisfy veterans
- Deliver safe high quality care
- Be a financially healthy organization
- Enhance relationships within the community
- Develop our employees

# Executive Summary



Robert Lynch, M.D.  
Network Director

Dear Friends,

Without a doubt, our number one challenge this past year came during hurricane season. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita had a tremendous impact on our network, destroying the homes of many of our employees and disrupting the lives of thousands. Our New Orleans VA Medical Center was flooded and Gulfport VA facility was destroyed leaving thousands of employees and patients displaced.

Through it all, our priority remained constant—patient care. We protected our patients, even while many of our employees did not even know the status of their own family or homes. We safely evacuated our patients and continued providing them high quality care at other locations in the network. Our preparation and response to these storms paid off. No lives were lost during the storm.

Patient care is, of course, a priority in good times and bad. That commitment was clear in our response to the hurricanes as well as other times when we were not fighting Mother Nature. Our network achieved exceptional performance in the overall quality of outpatient care, increasing satisfaction by 12 percent in the last two years. We also achieved exceptional performance in the overall quality of inpatient care, increasing satisfaction by five percent.

Those and many other accomplishments could not have been achieved without the hard work of our dedicated employees. For several years, our network has focused on strengthening our workforce. Training programs, such as Leadership Development Institute, Human Resources University, and Emerging VA Leaders, have proven to be invaluable in equipping our employees with the skills and confidence to tackle all challenges. The results are evident.

I could not be more proud of our employees. Not just the brave ones who rode out the hurricanes in Biloxi, Gulfport, New Orleans, and Houston, but also those in all our medical centers and outpatient clinics who came together as one VA family to help each other, our veterans, and non-veterans in times of need. Other VA medical centers took in extra patients, employed displaced staff, and some offered their support in other ways but all of them went above and beyond to get the job done.

Hurricane Katrina may have made landfall in 2005, but we will be feeling her effects for years to come. This next year, our focus will be on restoring and improving health care to veterans in the gulf coast areas. We have opened three outpatient clinics in towns surrounding New Orleans. In addition, we have opened an outpatient clinic at the New Orleans VA Medical Center. We continue to work on long-term plans for VA's presence in the New Orleans area.

While the Gulfport facility was pummeled and left inoperable by Katrina, its sister facility in Biloxi—eight miles down the road—survived the catastrophic storm. Our recovery efforts here will largely depend on accelerating Capital Asset Realignment for Enhances Services, an existing, national VA plan known as CARES, that is designed to ensure veterans receive high quality care well into the future. Prior to Katrina, that plan had called for greatly expanding services at the Biloxi facility. We will see accelerated funding and timetables to implement that plan and improve and expand services in the area.

We will work to enhance services at VA Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System's Biloxi campus, which has absorbed the workload of its Gulfport facility. The CARES plan calls for the transfer of all services provided by the Gulfport facility to the Biloxi Campus. Funding for a construction project to accommodate those services at Biloxi has been allocated in the 2006 budget.

While disaster relief and recovery efforts were the main focus of the last months of fiscal year 2005, there were many accomplishments throughout the years. You will see highlights of our successes in the following pages. We look forward to many more accomplishments this year.



# Satisfying Veterans

Defined as providing courteous, respectful, and timely access to appropriate care.

## 2005 Highlights

- Achieved exceptional performance in the overall quality of outpatient care, increasing satisfaction by 12 percent in the last two years.
- Increased satisfaction of the overall quality of inpatient care by five percent, achieving exceptional performance.
- Established a toll-free number for veterans displaced by Hurricane Katrina to ensure their continued medical care.



*A team of VA physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and support personnel at Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston prepare to head out with two mobile health clinics going to the Hurricane Rita-affected areas in Beaumont, Texas. The mobile clinics are equipped to evaluate and treat acute and chronic health problems, refill prescriptions, and administer immunizations.*

- Established mobile clinics in several areas in Mississippi and Louisiana within two days following Hurricane Katrina to provide veterans and non-veterans with access to timely care.
- Partnered with Walmart to provide temporary pharmacy services at no cost to patients after Hurricane Katrina.
- Increased satisfaction in the areas of access, continuity of care, courtesy, education/information, emotional support, overall coordination, preferences, specialist care, and visit coordination based on outpatient surveys.
- Increased satisfaction in the areas of access, courtesy, education, emotional support, family involvement, physical comfort, and preferences according to inpatient surveys.
- Improved customer service programs.

Improvements include revising employee customer service training, sharing survey results with patients and employees, looking at patient flow issues, using an Ambassador program to greet patients, and addressing wait time issues.

- Implemented VISN-wide customer service training called *Dare to Dance*.
- Implemented a VISN-wide exchange of best practices to improve customer service.
- Gave patients information and access to a new online prescription refill service available through VA's MyHealtheVet ([www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)), the personal online health record system designed for veterans in the VA health care system.



*Charles Pickett, volunteer, Fayetteville VA Medical Center, escorts Billy Hulse, patient, to an appointment. This is just one of the many ways our volunteers help us satisfy our veterans.*

# Delivering Safe High Quality Care

*Defined as competent, timely, cost-effective,  
minimal risk, achievable benefits.*

## 2005 Highlights

- Kept patients safe throughout Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. Evacuated the Gulfport facility and the New Orleans VA and transported the patients to nearby VA medical centers.



*Employees at Alexandria, Louisiana VA Medical Center load a tractor-trailer full of medical supplies, batteries, gasoline, water, and other items to be taken to New Orleans VA Medical Center after Hurricane Katrina. This truck was part of a convoy that also included engineering assessment staff and 40 police officers.*

- Restored patients' electronic medical records and prescription information after Hurricane Katrina, allowing access by medical personnel at the patients' new locations.
- Adopted the evidence-based practices promoted by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement. The national goal is to save 100 thousand lives by assuring certain practices are put into place.
- Performed time-outs before operating room procedures using a checklist to ensure all critical activities are accomplished in an error-free environment.
- Tracked patient-flow to identify where bottlenecks occur in an effort to reduce patient wait times.
- Met the VA's goal for timely completion of compensation and pension examinations.

- Implemented procedures to prevent skin injuries to elderly veterans, thereby reducing the number of potential pressure ulcers.
- Utilized cameras that make it possible to provide more timely eye examinations. Delivered more than 16 thousand routine diabetic eye screening exams via Tele-Retinal Imaging.
- Initiated Care Coordination programs, utilizing Health Buddy ® (pictured), to provide care in the home through the use of technology realizing significant reductions in hospital admissions (65 percent). The Health Buddy System allows health care providers to monitor patients' conditions at home through the use of electronic devices.
- Improved physical health monitoring for patients receiving antipsychotic medications.
- Received accreditation from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations at all of the Network's medical centers surveyed.



*The Health Buddy ®, demonstrated above, enables health care providers to monitor chronic conditions and provide important medical information to the patient without the patient leaving home.*

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## 2005 Highlights

- ### How We Spent Our Money in 2005
- 
- | Category               | Percentage |
|------------------------|------------|
| Salaries               | 60%        |
| Drugs/Medicines        | 19%        |
| Supplies               | 10%        |
| Equip/Land & Buildings | 5%         |
| Contract Services      | 3%         |
| Telephone/Utilities    | 3%         |



# Enhancing Relationships within the Community

*To improve services to veterans through enhanced information flow in the community.*

## 2005 Highlights

- Distributed numerous public service announcements, news releases, and responded to media requests during and after Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita.
- Kept Network's internet and intranet Web sites up-to-date with Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita information for employees and veterans.
- Created a special newsletter, *After the Storm*, as another means of getting information to displaced VA employees and other stakeholders. Public Affairs began publishing *After the Storm* on September 2.
- Spoke at more than 1,000 community events such as civic club meetings, city council meetings, career days, veterans' day programs, and veterans service organizations' meetings.



*From left to right—Ken Fisher, chairman, Fisher House Foundation, Inc.; the Honorable R. James “Jim” Nicholson, secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs; David McNerney, Congressional Medal of Honor recipient; the Honorable George Bush, 41st president of the United States; Arnold Fisher, vice chairman, Fisher House Foundation, Inc.; Audrey Fisher, trustee, Fisher House Foundation, Inc.; and Michael E. DeBakey, M.D., chancellor emeritus, Baylor College of Medicine cut the ribbon for the new Houston Fisher House.*



*One of many veterans who participated in the 19th Annual Golden Age Games hosted by the Oklahoma City VA Medical Center on the campus of the University of Oklahoma campus, May 20-26, 2005.*

- Hosted more than 350 community meetings such as the Annual Joint Briefing for

Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs Service Counselors and Department Commanders, town hall meetings, focus groups, and other stakeholder meetings.

- Attended more than 950 civic or community meetings.
- Sponsored more than 300 special events such as the 2005 National Veterans Golden Age Games in Oklahoma City, stand downs for homeless veterans, community outpatient clinic ribbon cutting ceremonies, Fisher House dedication in Houston, and POW-MIA Day events.
- Hosted or participated in more than 200 health information fairs.
- Developed about 460 publications for patient and employee education such as video newsletters, patient newsletters, veteran information packets, visitor guides and maps, news releases, media advisories, and two Hurricane Katrina documentary videos.
- Generated more than 950 news stories published in newspapers throughout the network and aired on local and national television stations.

- Treated more than 10 thousand veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. The Network had the second largest number of returning veterans in all of the VHA networks.

# Developing Our Employees



*To provide developmental training programs and educational opportunities for employees to meet current and future VISN needs.*

## 2005 Highlights

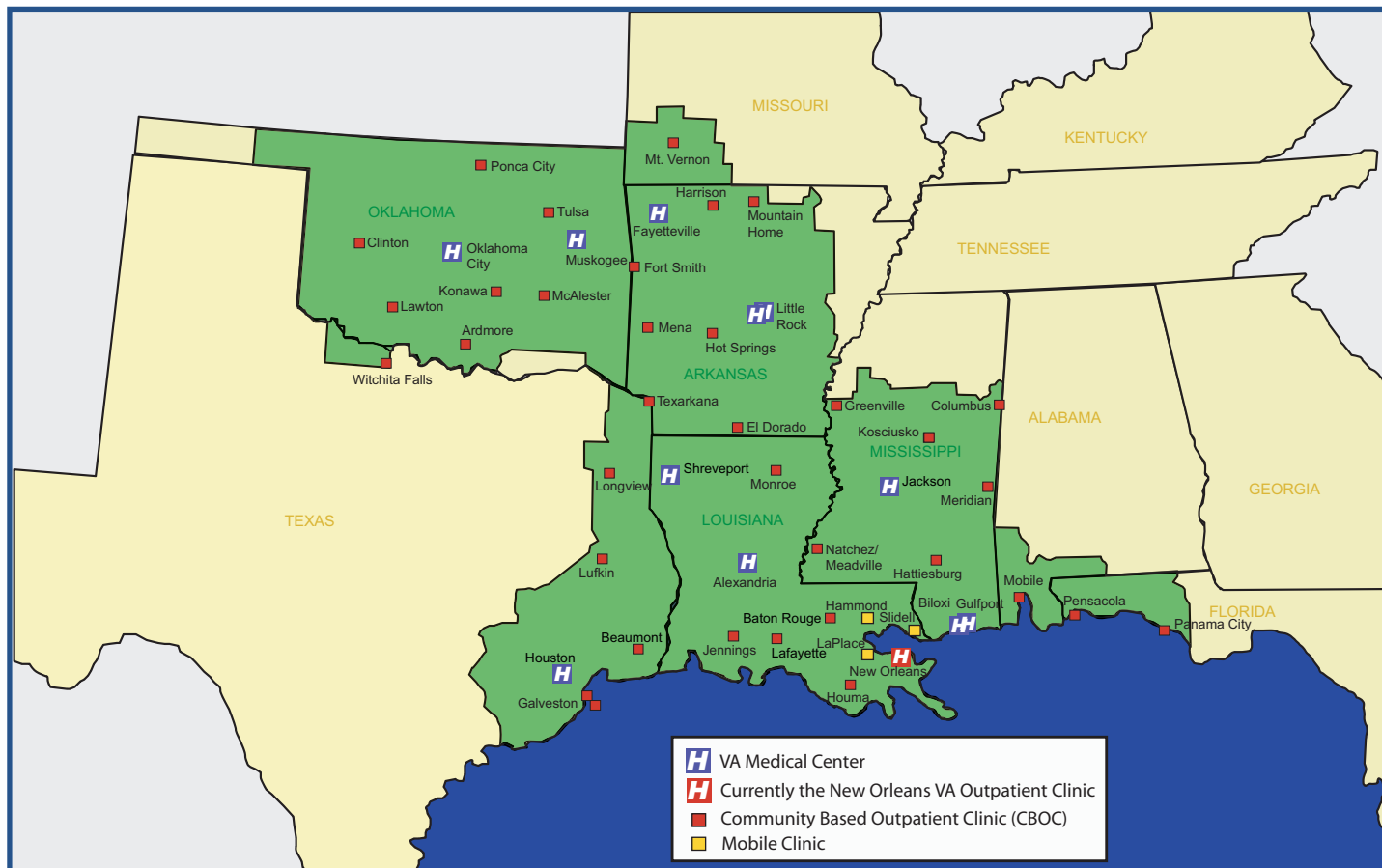
- Employed a total of 16,828 full and part-time network employees.
- Established a toll-free number for employees affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.
- Re-established contact with thousands of New Orleans and Gulf Coast VA employees after Hurricane Katrina.
- Detailed more than 1,400 New Orleans VA employees to other VA facilities across the United States.
- Provided critical knowledge to new supervisors and managers through the supervisory training program. To date, 394 supervisors/managers have completed the 40-hour face-to-face curriculum with very positive feedback. This figure represents 25 percent of supervisors in VISN 16.
- Graduated 41 employees from Leadership Development Institute (LDI), the network level leadership program for GS 9—12 and equivalent. A total of 156 have completed the program since the program's inception.
- Graduated 101 participants from Emerging VA Leaders (EVAL), the facility level developmental program for grades GS 5—8 and equivalent. A total of 409 participants have completed the program to date.
- Developed an entry level (GS 1—4 and equivalent) program, implemented at the facility level. There have been 101 participants to date.
- Created nine additional technical career field positions throughout the network in the areas of fiscal, acquisition, human resources, engineering and information technology. This brings the total of trainees funded by the VISN to 25.
- Continued comprehensive training of HR specialists and assistants via Human Resources University (HRU). A total of 300 participants have completed 47 courses through HRU.
- Implemented an on-line training program by Swank HealthCare that allows earning of critical education units for licensed providers. Employees received a total of 10,105 Continuing Education credits through the program.
- Hired a specialist to work with the Department of Labor, Office of Worker's Compensation to help reduce cost and improve case management.
- Established performance measures for the critical areas in human resources and implemented facility HR reviews network-wide.



*R. Jim Nicholson, secretary of veterans affairs and Rebecca Wiley (right), acting director, G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center; talk with New Orleans VA employees temporarily located in Jackson after Hurricane Katrina.*

# Our Locations

## Medical Centers and Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs)



**Alexandria VA Medical Center**  
Barbara Watkins, director  
P.O. Box 69004  
Alexandria, LA 71305-9004  
2495 Shreveport Hwy 71 N  
Pineville, LA 71360  
Phone: 318.473.0010  
CBOCs—Jennings, Lafayette

**Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System**  
Tim Shea, director  
4300 West 7th Street  
Little Rock, AR 72205  
Phone: 501.257.1000  
CBOCs—El Dorado, Mountain Home, Hot Springs, Mena

**Fayetteville VA Medical Center**  
Michael Winn, director  
1100 N. College Avenue  
Fayetteville, AR 72703  
Phone: 479.444.5000  
CBOCs—Mt. Vernon, MO; Harrison, AR; Fort Smith, AR

**G. V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center**  
Richard J. Baltz, director  
1500 E. Woodrow Wilson Drive  
Jackson, MS 39216  
Phone: 601.362.4471  
CBOCs—Meridian, Greenville, Kosciusko, Hattiesburg, Natchez, Columbus

**Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System**  
Charles Sepich, director  
400 Veterans Avenue  
Biloxi, MS 39531  
Phone: 228.523.5000  
CBOCs—Mobile, AL; Pensacola, FL; Panama City, FL

**Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center**  
Edgar Tucker, director  
2002 Holcombe Blvd.  
Houston, TX 77030  
Phone: 713.791.1414  
CBOCs—Beaumont, Lufkin, Galveston

**Muskogee VA Medical Center**  
Adam Walmus, director  
Honor Heights Drive  
Muskogee, OK 74401  
Phone: 918.683.3261  
CBOCs—Tulsa, McAlester

**New Orleans VA Medical Center**  
John D. Church, Jr., director  
Note—due to damage caused by Hurricane Katrina, the New Orleans VA is operating an outpatient clinic only at the following location—  
1601 Perdido Street  
New Orleans, LA 70112  
Phone: 1.800.935.8387

The New Orleans VA administrative office may be reached at 504.568.0811.

CBOCs—Baton Rouge, Houma  
Mobile Clinics—Hammond, LaPlace, Slidell

**Oklahoma City VA Medical Center**  
Steven Gentling, director  
921 N.E. 13th  
Oklahoma City, OK 73104  
Phone: 405.270.1000  
CBOCs—Lawton, OK; Ponca City, OK; Clinton, OK; Ardmore, OK; Konowa, OK; Wichita Falls, TX

**Overton Brooks VA Medical Center**  
George Moore, director  
510 E. Stoner Avenue  
Shreveport, LA 71101  
Phone: 318.221.8411  
CBOCs—Texarkana, AR; Monroe, LA; Longview, TX



1600 Woodrow Wilson Drive  
Third floor, Suite A  
Jackson, Mississippi 39216  
Telephone: 601.364.7900